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REST AREA SATISFACTION SURVEY

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The South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) is the owner and custodian of 24 Rest Areas and 9 Welcome Centers across South Carolina. They are located on the interstates and one along a national highway system. Rest areas/welcome centers serve a much needed purpose for persons traveling along South Carolina roadways such as a place to take a short break, use the restroom facilities, walk pets, picnic, gather tourism information at the Welcome Centers and to overall refresh themselves before getting back onto the roads. Many states refer to rest areas as *safety rest areas* as the intended purpose of the facility is for the safety of the driver and others on the roadway. Presently, SCDOT does not gather data from our customers, the traveling public. The South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism (SCPRT) staff the Welcome Centers. They do not survey customers; however, a registry book is utilized to gather information on traveler's home state and length of stay in South Carolina. The registry book has a column for comments which SCPRT shares with SCDOT when applicable. Design and maintenance of rest areas and welcome centers belong to our staff that must make assumptions concerning the needs of the customers. As the facility owner, we are at a loss in meeting the customer's needs and striving to improve customer satisfaction.

This project will consist of the development of a customer survey card to be deployed at each rest area and welcome center in the state, a web based survey, deployment methods, method of gathering and recording data, and use of the data on an on-going basis.

Project Purpose

The purpose of the project is to determine customer satisfaction and identify improvements to South Carolina Rest Areas and Welcome Centers. The method targeted in this project is the deployment of a survey. One of the five end states in the

SCDOT/FHWA Strategic Plan 2006-2008 is to “Improve Customer Satisfaction by 10%”¹. As customer satisfaction relates to rest areas, we must first identify a level of satisfaction to understand weaknesses to make improvements. This survey is a means to understanding.

Developing the Survey

Data collection will be gathered via the written rest area satisfaction survey card and a web based rest area satisfaction survey.

- There are two methods available to gather the hand written data – outsource the form design, printing, scanning of the survey cards, and data entry to a private sector vendor via a public bid or, SCDOT staff to design the form, have the cards printed, and enter the data with our present workforce. Either method will include SCDOT placing the blank surveys at the 33 rest area locations and gathering the completed cards.
- The data collected will address the convenience, cleanliness, and grounds of the facilities as a single location or combined as a whole representation of South Carolina rest areas. SCDOT will then know the strengths and weaknesses to make improvements.
- Purpose of collection methods.
 - Written survey cards – These cards placed at the site will allow a traveler to quickly and easily complete the survey, drop it in the box at the site or take to complete later on the SCDOT website. By completing the card on site, the information is fresh on the mind of the person completing the survey and most importantly, the information is accurate to the location in which the survey is being completed. Most travelers are not aware of the

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county in which a rest area is located. Each survey will indicate the rest area or welcome center location by its name and building number utilized by the SCDOT Facility Assessment system, a condition assessment database.

- Web based survey – The web based survey will be available on the SCDOT internet website, www.scdot.org. This method is the least costly of all methods for gathering data. As the person submits their survey, the data is automatically entered into the database; therefore, reducing man hours expended gathering and in-putting the data and eliminating printing costs. Consequently, this method has the greatest capability to be the least accurate. The first item on the web based survey will be a drop down box for the selection of particular rest area/welcome center to be surveyed. If the traveler selects the wrong location, the data isn't valid and there are no means to determine the validity. There will be a *Don't Know Location* selection in the drop down box so that those unaware of a precise location are given an option. Their survey data will only be computed for the state averages.

Analyzing the Data

The data collected from the South Carolina rest areas will be compared with states such as Washington, Missouri, and Florida who are presently gathering data from their rest area customers. Once South Carolina establishes a baseline from its data, the baseline will become a benchmark for future years.

- Washington² [WashingtonDOTGrayNotebookMar07.pdf](#), Missouri³
[MissouriTracker.pdf](#), and Florida⁴ [Florida Department of Transportation -](#)

center customers and publish the information on their websites. As other states collect and publish data, we will use those states for comparison as well.

- In the future, South Carolina rest area results will be its own benchmark, year to year to determine trends.
- A database will store the survey records for SCDOT staff to review the survey results for each rest area location independently or combine all survey results for an average for all facilities. Results will be analyzed quarterly and yearly for determining methods for improving customer satisfaction and will be used for improving future rest area and welcome center designs. Yearly results will be reported in the Annual Accountability Report.

Implementing the Project

The implementation plan consists of (8) action steps.

1. Review and approval of the customer satisfaction survey by the SCDOT Director of Maintenance, the 7 District Engineering Administrators, and State Highway Engineering Support Staff. Task to be performed by this writer, completion date of 3/1/08.
2. Design, approval, and construction of survey card racks for placement at the 33 sites. Task to be performed by this writer, completion date of 5/1/08.
3. Design of the database for collecting and analyzing the data. Task to be performed by the SCDOT IT Services Department. Approval shall be by

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this writer and the SCDOT Director of Maintenance Office, completion
date of 5/1/08.

4. Training sessions for local staff, completion date of 6/1/08.
5. Placement of the racks and survey cards at all 33 locations. Task to be performed by this writer, completion date of 7/1/08.
6. Weekly gathering of cards by county staff. Task to be performed by the county maintenance staff, first completion date of 7/9/08.
7. Entering card data by county staff. Task to be performed by the county maintenance staff, first completion date of 10/1/08.
8. Quarterly and yearly analysis of data. Task to be performed by the SCDOT Director of Maintenance Office and the Capital Improvements Office.

Process Flow Charts Shown on Following Pages, Figures 1 & 2

Internet Customer Survey Flow Chart

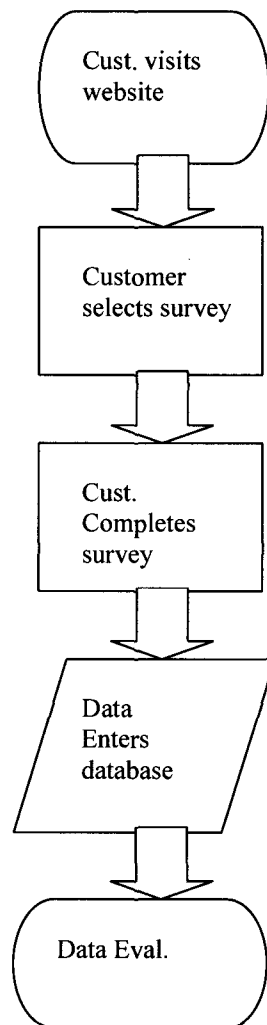


Figure 1

Written Customer Survey Card Flow Chart

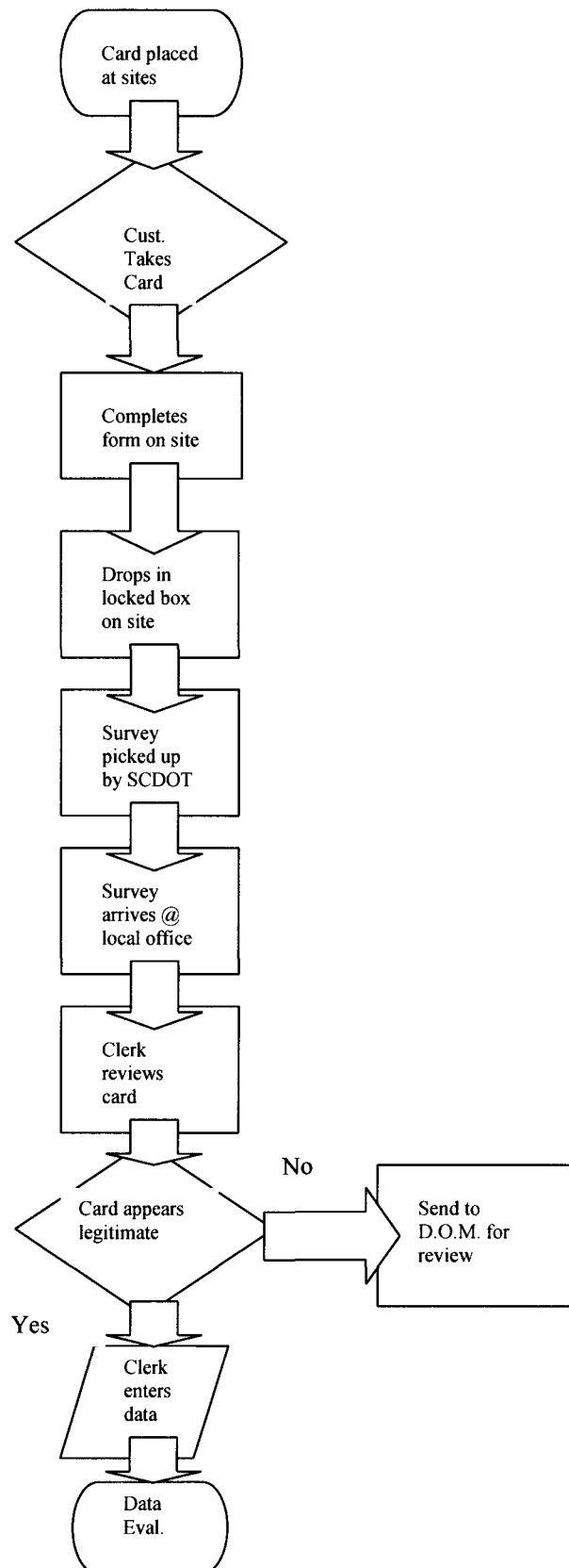


Figure 2

Figures 1 and 2 indicate the simplicity of the internet survey as opposed to the handwritten survey card. Since all customers do not have access to the internet, nor will we provide an on site electronic kiosk to enter the data onto the internet, the written survey card must be provided as a data collection method.

Potential obstacles

- Concerns on the part of county employees responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the facility and the custodial contractor's staff that the information gathered will be used in some way against them. Personal and clear communication with those employees/contract employees to explain the purpose of the survey and the use of the data will aid in calming the concerns.
- Data contamination by the public, local SCDOT employees, and/or the custodial employees by completing numerous survey cards or entering the data improperly into the system is a possibility. As the rest areas are not supervised by SCDOT personnel, there isn't a process to eliminate data contamination. If an excessive quantity of either positive or negative cards are received, the county personnel will notify the Director of Maintenance Office to investigate. Additionally, the written cards will be submitted to the Director of Maintenance Office quarterly after the data is entered. Spot checks of data will occur to determine a level of accuracy on the part of the staff entering the data. Certain human error is expected. The perception of oversight should be as effective as the oversight itself.

Project Cost Estimate

Cost estimate for in-house method consist of the cost for printing of cards, development of a database, construction and placement of display racks at each survey card location, and in-putting of data by field offices, on-going data analysis and database maintenance. Both cost estimates are based on 20,000 surveys completed annually.

In-House Cost Estimate – Year 1

IT Cost	\$ 4,000
Data entry Man-hours	\$ 0
1.5 minutes/survey X 20,000 surveys	
500 man hours X \$27.56/hour average	
\$13,785 – cost will not be included as	
It has been determined there will be	
No additional work force needed	
Printing Costs (Department of Corrections)	\$ 674
Display Racks \$300 x 33 sites	\$ 9,900
Survey Collection	\$ <u>0</u>
Total Cost	\$14,574

Out-Sourced Cost Estimate – Year 1

IT Cost	\$ 4,000
Vendor Price (see Appendices A)	\$12,872
Display Racks \$300 x 33 sites	\$ <u>9,900</u>
Total Cost	\$26,772

In-House Cost Estimate – Future Years

IT Cost

Database maintenance	\$ 200
Data entry Man-hours	\$ 0

1.5 minutes/survey X 20,000 surveys

500 man hours X \$27.56/hour average

\$13,785 – cost will not be included as

It has been determined there will be

No additional work force needed

Printing Costs (Department of Corrections)	\$ 707
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Display Racks \$315 x 5 sites

Routine damage replacement	\$ 1,575
Survey Collection	<u>\$ 0</u>

Total Cost	\$ 2,482
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Out-Sourced Cost Estimate – Future Years

IT Cost

Database maintenance	\$ 200
Vendor Price (estimate)	\$13,516

Display Racks \$315 x 5 sites

Routine damage replacement	<u>\$ 1,575</u>
Total Cost	\$15,291

Based on the vendor quote, the cost to outsource the survey is cost prohibitive. The workload may become such that the services of an outside provider will be necessary in

the future. SCDOT employees are our greatest resource. The Director of Maintenance Office has determined there are personnel available to place, gather and input the data into the system. There will be no increase in staffing for this survey to be performed. We may utilize the custodial contractors to stock and place the survey cards at each site.

Communication with Stakeholders

Data from the rest area/welcome center satisfaction surveys will be published in the Annual Accountability Report (AAR) which is posted on the SCDOT internet website and submitted to the legislature annually for review. The AAR, a requirement by state law, is our method of communicating activities and results to our customers.

As an annual report, the continual collection of survey results, comparisons to past SCDOT survey results and comparison to other states survey results will solidify surveying our rest area customers as a means to gather this measurable and usable data. Additionally, the SCDOT Director of Maintenance may elect to provide the survey results with the custodial contractor. The results will not be beneficial to use as a reward/penalty method for the contractor as it is believed the new facilities, regardless of how well kept, will all score higher than the older facilities; however, the survey results may be advantageous in assessing the quality of the service at each location.

Follow Thru

An annual review of the survey questions, methods for gathering and collecting data will need to be performed by SCDOT staff. The survey will be an evolving document, constantly revised, tweaked, improved, and possibly expanded to collect even more data such as future wants or needs of our customers. Annual review should take place at the time of submitting data for the AAR. A review team should include a representative from the following DOT sections – Director of Maintenance, Capital Improvements, IT

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Services, a District Office, and a county office. The district and county office
representatives shall rotate annually to provide a statewide DOT perspective.

Summary

The SCDOT 2006-2008 Strategic Plan states, "Serving the customers well is how we earn *Public Trust*. Whether internally or externally, customer service is the cornerstone of our success. Not only is it our duty to serve the citizens, it is our duty to serve each other".⁵ To serve our customers, we must understand the needs of our customers. The Rest Area Satisfaction Survey will provide the means to understanding.

¹ SCDOT/FHWA Strategic Plan 2006-2008.

² Washington DOT, The Gray Book, quarter ending 3/31/07, pages 55-57.

³ Missouri Department of Transportation, Tracker, April 2006, pages 14, 14a-14e.

⁴ Florida Department of Transportation, 2000-2001 Customer Satisfaction Survey, Table 6.

⁵ SCDOT 2006-2008 Strategic Plan Update.



South Carolina Department of Transportation Pricing (Quote # 17999)

Date Quoted: September 28, 2007

Project Overview	
Methodology: Paper Based (OMR) Survey	
Graphics, Printing and Mailshop: Scantron will design a scannable OMR form (Customer Satisfaction Survey) with tieback to respondents. Forms will be 8.5 x 11 and print 2-color front/ 0-color back (2/0) on 60# paper. Scantron will shrink wrap forms per location (33). The total print quantity for the project will be 20,000 surveys. Scantron Corporation will bulk ship the forms directly to the South Carolina Department of Transportation for distribution.	
Data Collection and Scanning: Scantron will receive completed surveys via bulk shipment from the South Carolina Department of Transportation. An estimated response rate of 100% (approximately 5,000 surveys per quarter [4]= 20,000 total) is expected. Scantron will scan all surveys in one batch per quarter and provide the requested results.	
Data Files : At the conclusion of each semesters data processing Scantron Corporation will provide the South Carolina Department of Transportation an Excel data file containing the raw survey results. Data file specifications to be discussed and reviewed before project onset to ensure accuracy.	
Reporting : At the conclusion of each quarters (4) data processing Scantron Corporation will provide the South Carolina Department of Transportation (1) Overall report containing counts, percents, and averages for each question. Reporting specifications to be discussed and reviewed before project onset to ensure accuracy. The pricing below includes Scantron standard reporting format (sample available upon request), other formats are available but may incur additional costs.	
Total Survey Print Quantity:	20,000
Total Processed (Scanned) Surveys @ 90% Response Rate:	5,000
Estimated Project Total:	\$ 12,871.67
<i>Please Note: Data collection price is an estimation and may vary, billing will be based on actual quantities processed. Pricing excludes shipping, postage, and all applicable taxes. Pricing assumes no changes to surveys or reports once project has commenced, any changes may incur additional graphics and/or programming charges. If requested, key entry/transcription of comments can be provided at \$45.00/hr, with a \$225 minimum.</i>	